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SUBJECT: TURKISH BOYCOTTS OF U.S. GOODS

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This message has been coordinated with Istanbul and Adana

1. (U) A barrage of media disinformation about Falluja and U.S. actions in general in Iraq has added to negative public opinion in Turkey, and has led to calls for boycott of American products in recent weeks. The following is a summary of these boycott calls based on press sources.

-- Bulent Yildirim, Chair of the Turkish Human Rights Organization, has called on Turks to boycott American, British and Israeli goods to protest "massacres" in Iraq and Palestine.

-- The Turkish Chamber of Mechanical Engineers (TMMOB) Bursa Branch Office announced it would boycott American products, due to alleged U.S. military action against civilians in Iraq. Bursa Branch Office President Ismail Kavurmaci stated that the operation which the U.S. claimed would bring democracy to Iraq had become a massacre. Kavurmaci called the general public to support TMMOB's boycott and to stop buying American products.

-- The Health and Social Services Labor Union (Saglik Sen) Erzurum Branch announced that it would protest "the inhuman military action and massacre" in Iraq, and stop buying American and Israeli goods. Saglik Sen called on all its members and the Turkish public to support this campaign.

-- The Saadet Party Adana Branch protested the U.S. military action in Iraq by leaving a black wreath in front of the American Consulate in Adana. SP Adana Branch President Sitki Cengil called the Turkish public to stop financing the arms used in Iraq through purchases of American products.

-- The Civil Servants' Labor Union (Memur-Sen) Elazig Branch started a campaign to boycott American products. Memur-Sen Elazig Branch called on the Turkish public and the world to join the campaign, and burned some American products during the protest.

-- The Civil Servants' Labor Union (Memur-Sen) Rize Branch also called for a boycott. Memur-Sen Rize Branch President Mehmet Sadik Cengiz claimed "the greater Middle-East Project of Israel and the U.S." was the main reason underlying the "massacre" in Iraq.

-- The Malatya Chamber of Commerce and Industry started a campaign to boycott American products, in order to protest U.S. military action in Iraq. Chamber President Mucahit Findikli said the USG, while claiming to bring democracy to Iraq, was conducting mass murder in Iraq. Findikli called the Turkish public to join the campaign to demonstrate their sensitivity about the developments in Iraq.

-- The Middle East Technical University Lecturers' Association (in Ankara) encouraged its members to protest the U.S. invasion in Iraq by avoiding investment in and use of USD in transactions. The Association also stated that companies continuing commercial relations with the temporary administration in Iraq, including trucking companies, should also be boycotted.

-- At least two shopowners in the Ankara Castle area have put up signs indicating American customers would not be welcome. This story has been covered widely in the Turkish press, including in Turkey's largest-circulation daily, "Hurriyet."

-- The extremist Islamist press -- "Vakit" and "Milli Gazete" have frequently called on their readers (combined daily circulation of about 100,000) to support a boycott of US (and Israeli) goods.

2. (SBU) Comment: While these boycott calls reflect anti-American sentiment in Turkey, it is unlikely that they will have a significant impact on U.S. companies. Coca-Cola told Istanbul Polecon Chief that they expected no impact. The Coca Cola representative said that "even in the hottest days last year" when there were similar efforts they saw no

impact on their sales and bottom line, and that they expect that will be the case again this time.

13. (SBU) Meeting with the Turkish-American Business Association (TABA) December 7, the Ambassador suggested that TABA, which represents Turkish companies that do business with the United States, as well as some U.S. companies, speak out against these boycotts. Embassy and Consulates Istanbul and Adana will continue to monitor the impact of such boycotts.

Edelman